



Connecticut Department of  
**ENERGY &  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – August 31, 2016

Appropriations, Human Services, and Energy and Technology Committees

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

Presented By Deputy Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

***2016/2017 Allocation Plan for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Block Grant***

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the 2016/2017 Allocation Plan for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Block Grant (the Plan). The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP is pleased to support the federal fiscal year 2017 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Allocation Plan, as it will help reduce the percentage of household income spent on home energy costs. Reducing the energy burden for low-income residents is an important statewide goal that we are pursuing through our implementation of Connecticut's Comprehensive Energy Strategy. This includes our work with stakeholders to improve the energy efficiency of 80% of homes by 2030. This goal can only be reached by getting homes ready to be weatherized and by addressing barriers to weatherization that exist at all income levels, and that are particularly difficult to address in low-income homes.

We are especially pleased to support an important development for this year's Plan. Through an effective collaboration between many stakeholders, including DEEP, the Department of Social Services, the Office of Policy and Management, and other members of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board, this year's Plan includes \$1 million in LIHEAP funds to build a foundation for sufficiently integrating energy management services to catalyze successful implementation of the federal Weatherization Assistance Program. This includes being prepared for the needs and contingencies that are identified when preparing for the completion of energy audits and the completion of weatherization services.

Funding to prepare homes for weatherization will help us unlock additional benefits to low-income households for every dollar spent on heating assistance. This Plan will also better align Connecticut with most states that already use LIHEAP funds in customized ways to supplement the federal Weatherization Assistance Program for low-income households. Being better prepared to take care of needs and contingencies prior to weatherization ultimately means that people are healthier and safer while valuable energy assistance dollars are optimally spent to safely and efficiently heat homes.

Currently a percentage of federal Weatherization Assistance Program funds are allowed to be used to address problems that would otherwise prevent weatherization, such as conditions in homes that represent mold hazards, fire hazards, and inadequate ventilation. However, the standard percentage of funding for this work is not aligned with the large percentage of homes in Connecticut that are not energy efficient, the majority of which were built prior to 1980, and often present complex conditions that prevent the completion of weatherization. Additional funding that provides for addressing health and safety measures for the provision of weatherization services will extend the reach of LIHEAP and Weatherization Assistance Program funds by taking care of site-specific environmental issues, allowable repairs, client education, materials testing, and training of assessment staff. These are measures to address various issues to ensure that as many properties as possible are prepared to have health and safety needs addressed so that weatherization services can be completed.

Better aligned funding levels means that energy auditors who are trained to recognize fire hazards, water leaks, and inadequate ventilation of combustion equipment will have better resources to both recognize conditions that are health and safety concerns and to identify what is needed to be addressed so that barriers can be removed and audits and weatherization services can be completed. Examples of eligible activities include minor electrical repairs by licensed electricians that are completed to prevent circuit overloading and the elimination of live knob and tube wiring prior to insulating. The cleaning and/or repair of flues and chimneys, the repair of minor fuel and gas leaks, and removing the source of inadequate moisture removal can make it possible to install improvements that would otherwise need to be deferred, preventing a low-income household from reducing its energy consumption through efficient energy management.

Through its role as the administrator of the U.S. Department of Energy's low-income Weatherization Assistance Program, DEEP, in consultation with the Department of Social Services, will be responsible for administering the work and tracking the use of LIHEAP funds and data necessary in this portion of the Plan to fully comply with federal reporting requirements pertaining to expenditure of LIHEAP funds.

DEEP also supports the Plan's allocation of a percentage of the LIHEAP funds for emergency replacement of inoperable or unsafe heating equipment with high efficiency furnaces, boilers, heat pumps, or other heating and water heating equipment. We appreciate the Department of Social Services' continued use of a protocol to ensure that high efficiency equipment is installed when such emergency repairs or replacements are made because this will help reduce the energy burden of low-income residents.

In summary, DEEP supports the energy efficiency goals of this year's Plan and looks forward to working with the Department of Social Services and others to ensure that residents benefit from this important integration of public health, human services, and energy savings goals. The investment in this year's plan is an important step in building the foundational capacity for better integrated energy management services. Most importantly, catalyzing energy efficiency upgrades in low-income households in an integrated way means that LIHEAP dollars go further in the future, helping more households.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or [Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov](mailto:Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov) or Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or [Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).